



BRIEFING

Migration Flows of A8 and other EU Migrants to and from the UK

AUTHOR: DR CARLOS VARGAS-SILVA
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3rd Revision



This briefing discusses migration of European Union (EU) citizens (excluding British citizens) to and from the UK. A special focus of the briefing is on A8 citizens – citizens of the eight countries that joined the EU in May 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and A2 citizens – citizens of the two countries that joined the European Union (EU) in January 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania).

Please note that the LTIM estimates used in this briefing are being revised by the ONS. In their 'Quality of Long-Term International Migration estimates from 2001 to 2011' report published on 10th April 2014, the ONS has revised the total net migration estimates for 2001-2011; this suggests that the total net migration between 2001 and 2011 was underestimated by 346,000 net-migrants. This revision is based on evidence of underestimation by the LTIM, especially of migration from the A8 Eastern European countries. However, a revised version of inflows and outflows as well as breakdowns by citizenship or reason for migration, etc., is not currently available.

Key Points

The accession of eight East European countries (A8 countries) to the EU in 2004 led to a significant increase in the inflow of EU citizens to the UK. The average annual Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) inflow of EU citizens (excluding British citizens) for 2004-2012 was around 170,000, compared to 67,000 during 1997-2003.

LTIM estimates suggest that net migration of A8 citizens was 30,000 in 2012. During 2004-2012, LTIM data suggest that total net migration of A8 citizens was 423,000; however, the ONS has indicated that this is an underestimate.

Results from the 2011 Census suggest that 2.7 million residents of the UK were born in other EU countries. About 1.1 million of those (42%) were born in countries which joined the EU in 2004 or afterwards.

The number of A8 citizens working in the UK number was estimated at 723,000 in the third quarter of 2013 according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The number of National Insurance Number (NINo) allocations to A8 citizens in the last quarter of 2013 was 50,559. This represents a decrease from the peak in the first quarter of 2007 (111,440). The number of NINo allocations to A2 citizens in the first quarter of 2012 was 4,960.

Understanding the evidence

In UK immigration debates, EU citizens are a key group as they enjoy free movement within the European Union; hence, the UK Government cannot limit their immigration under EU law.

With the exception of the UK, Ireland and Sweden, all other EU countries decided to temporarily restrict labour market access to migrants from the A8 countries upon accession to the EU. This was possible because the accession agreements allowed existing member states of the EU to impose restrictions on the immigration of citizens from the new member countries for a maximum of seven years. In the UK, A8 citizens were able to freely and legally take up employment from May 2004 as long as they registered with the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). This requirement ended in 2011. The UK imposed restrictions on the access to labour markets of A2 citizens. These restrictions were lifted in January 2014, when citizens of these countries gained the same rights as all other EU citizens to live and work in any country in the union.

Four main data sources provide information about EU migration and migrants in the UK (see evidence gaps and limitations below to understand challenges associated with these sources):

Long-Term International Migration (LTIM) estimates of the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS): provide data on immigration, emigration and net migration of EU and A8 citizens based on a standard definition of a long-term migrant as a person who moves to a country for at least a year. The International Passenger Survey is the main source of information for these estimates (see the briefing on 'Long-Term International Migration Flows to and from the UK').

Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from the ONS: provide data on EU, A2 and A8 migrants in the UK labour market.

2011 Census data for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: provide information on the stock of EU migrants in the UK, including separate estimates for those who were born in countries which joined the EU in 2004 or afterwards. The census is an official count of the population and provides better estimates of the population characteristics in local areas.

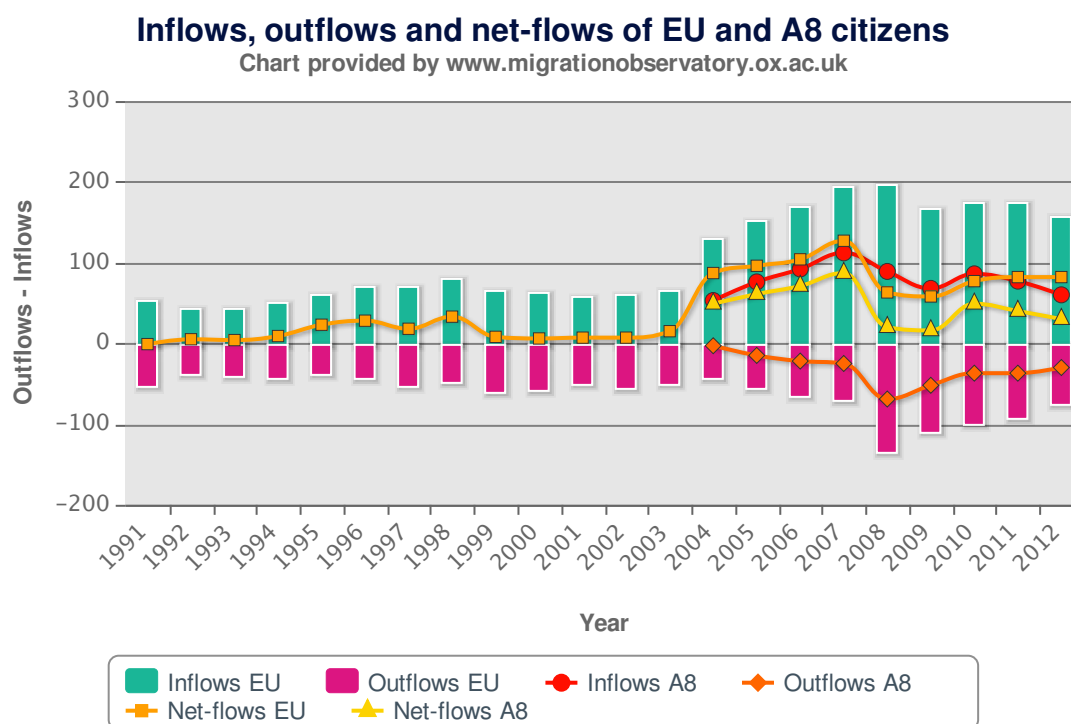
National Insurance Number (NINo) allocation data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP): provide information about the allocations of new numbers to EU, A8 and A2 workers. These can provide an idea of the number of citizens from these countries that enter the UK labour market.

According to the LTIM estimate, during 2004-2012, total net migration of A8 citizens was 423,000

The high level of immigration from the A8 to the UK after accession (713,000 for the 2004-2012 period) was not anticipated in reports used by the Home Office at the time; analysis at the time of the accession (Dustmann et al. 2003) suggested that flows were going to be much smaller. Due to a lack of historical data on migration from A8 countries to the UK, the projections for post-enlargement immigration from the A8 countries to the UK were based on a model whose parameters had to be estimated using data from other countries. Another problem with the projections was that this large-scale migration contrasts with the dynamics of previous EU accessions such as Spain and Portugal. In those cases, there were no significant migration movements (Vargas-Silva, 2011).

Figure 1 uses data from the LTIM series to show the inflows, outflows and net-flows of long-term international migrants (i.e. those saying that they intend to stay in the UK for at least 12 months) from the EU and A8 for the period 1991-2012 based on country of citizenship. During 2004-2012, total net migration of A8 citizens was 423,000. A8 net migration during 2012 was 30,000. This represents a decrease of 10,000 net migrants from the 2011 level of 40,000.

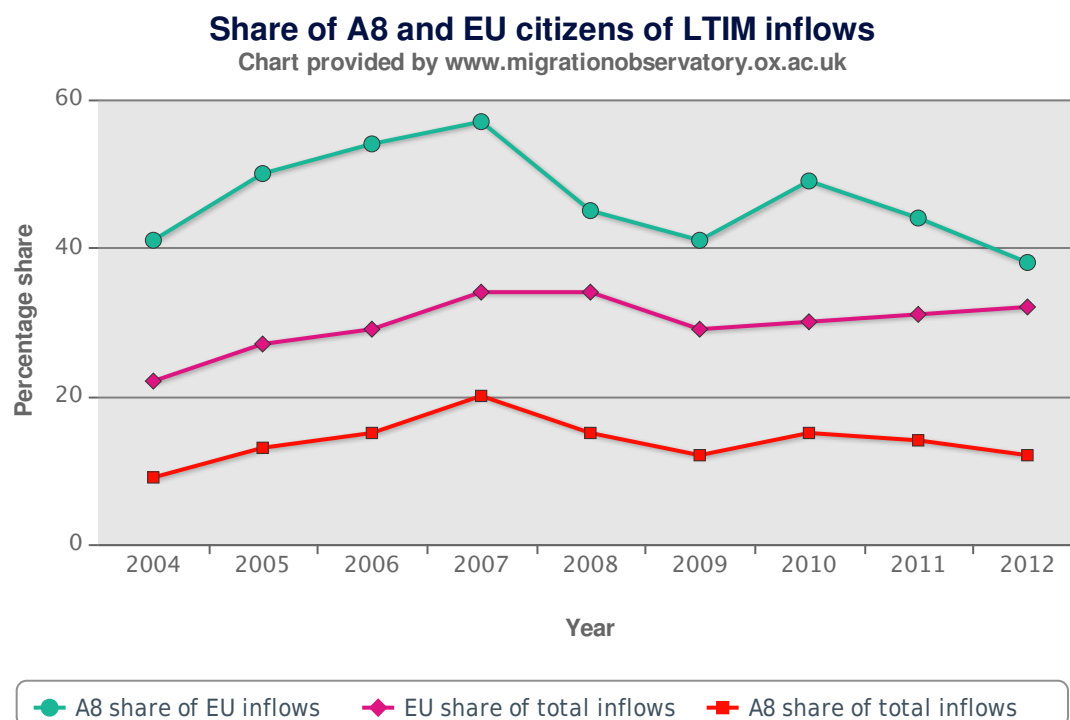
Figure 1



Source: Office for National Statistics, Long-Term International Migration estimates

Inflows of EU migrants were mainly flat for the 1991-2003 period, averaging close to 61,000 per year. With the inclusion of A8 citizens in the EU estimates in 2004, there was a significant jump in estimated EU migration inflows to the UK and the average annual inflow for the period 2004-2012 was around 170,000 EU migrants. As of 2012, EU inflows account for close to 32% of total migration inflows, a share that has remained relatively stable since 2005 (see Figure 2). A8 workers accounted for close to 12% of total (and 38% of EU) migration inflows to the UK in 2012, a share that has decreased since the 2007 peak (about 20%).

Figure 2



Source : Office for National Statistics, Long-Term International Migration estimates

However, it is important to note that the ONS has concluded that immigration from the A8 countries was underestimated in the mid-2000s (ONS, 2012). ONS estimations suggest that 250,000 incoming migrants from A8 countries were missed completely, mainly due to limitations in the coverage of the IPS at that time. Yet, this 250,000 does not represent the full underestimate of the growth of the A8 population between mid-2001 and the 2011 Census.

Other factors, including additional problems with IPS estimates, account for the rest of the difference of an estimated 475,000 net-migrants between the LTIM estimate of 325,000 net-migrants between 2001 and 2010 and the implied net migration of 800,000 according to the 2001 and 2011 Census results.

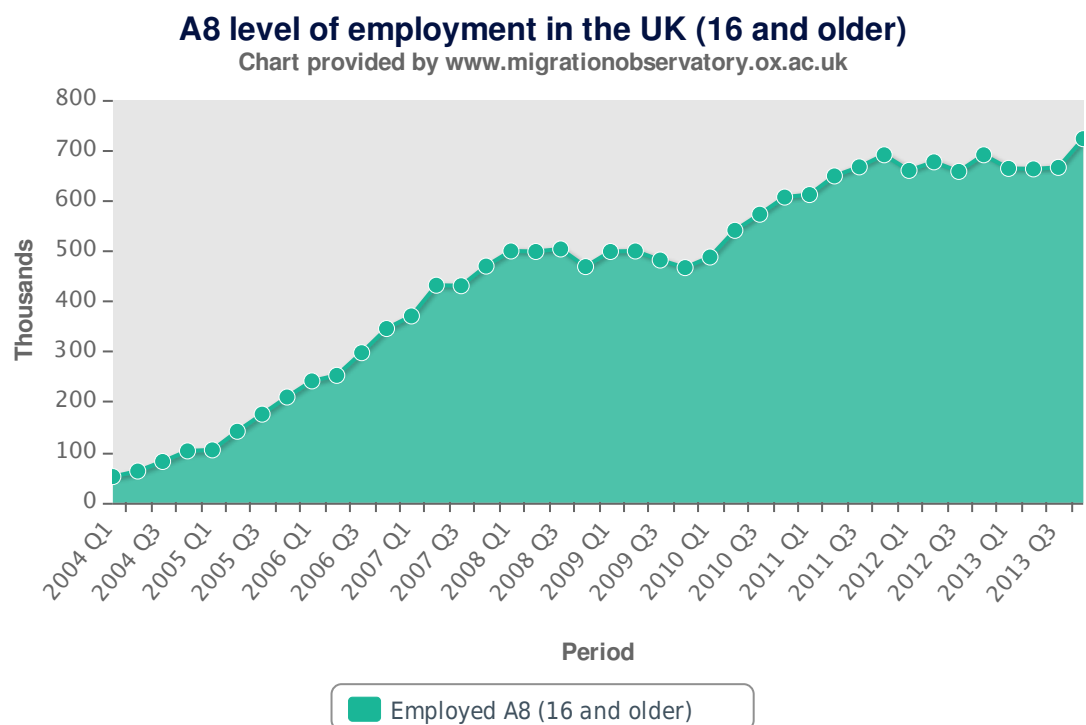
According to the 2011 Census, 2.7 million residents of the UK were born in other EU countries. Of those, 41.7% (1.1 million) were born in the A8 and A2 Accession countries

The results from the 2011 census suggest that 2.7 million residents of the United Kingdom were born in other EU countries. About 41.7% (1.1 million) of those were born in the A8 and A2 Accession countries. The number of Polish born residents in the UK was 654,010 in 2011 while the number of Romanian born residents in the UK was 83,168. About 24% of all Polish born residents in the UK live in London, while this number is 54% for Romanians.

In 2010 the number of A8 citizens in the UK labour market began increasing from a relatively stable level since 2008, before stabilising again since 2012 at around 700,000

Figure 3 presents the level of employment of A8 migrants (based on nationality) using the ONS estimates from the LFS. There is a clear increase in the level of employment all the way to the first quarter of 2008, at which point the number stabilised at around 500,000. However, the number started increasing again in 2010, until it stabilised again in 2011 at around 700,000. Currently, the number of A8 citizens in employment in the UK stands at 723,000 (as of third quarter of 2013).

Figure 3



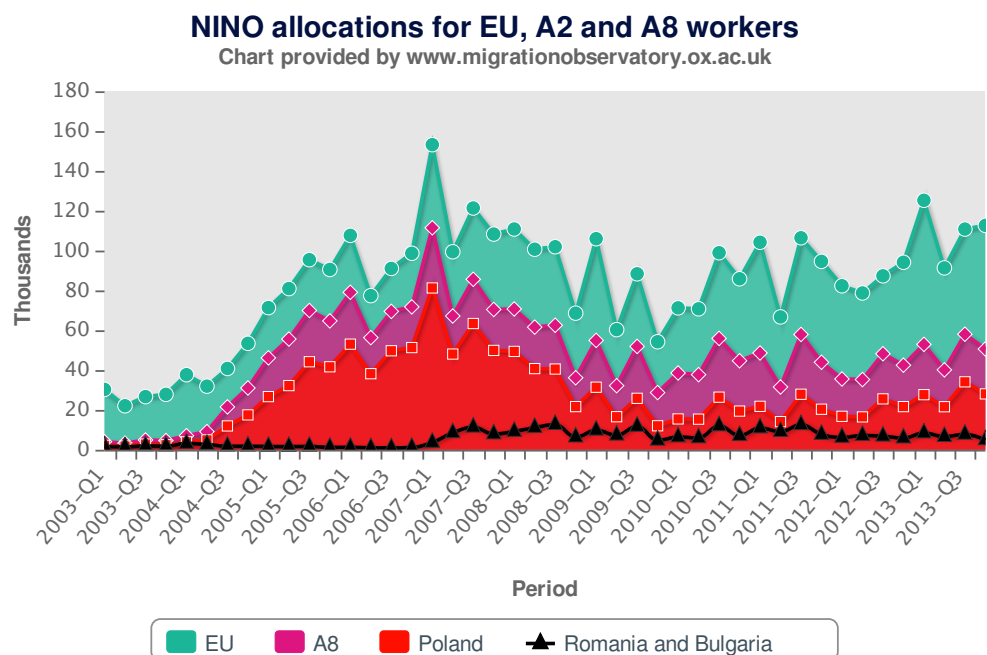
Source : Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

The number of NINo allocations to A8 citizens in the last quarter of 2013 was 50,559. The respective number for A2 citizens was 4,960

Figure 4 provides the number of new NINo allocations to citizens of all the EU countries, all the A8 countries, Poland and the A2 countries. The inflow dynamics presented by NINo allocations are similar to the ones suggested by the LTIM data. Until 2004 the numbers were small and then there was a steep increase until 2007 (first quarter). At that peak, quarterly NINo allocations to A8 citizens were about 111,000 (first quarter of 2007), and of those, 81,000 were from Polish citizens. Since then there has been an overall downtrend in NINo allocations to A8 citizens, including Polish citizens, and the numbers have since stabilized at around 45,000 allocations per quarter to A8 nationals. The latest estimate for the last quarter of 2013 is 50,559 allocations for A8 citizens, including 28,058 for Polish citizens.

Figure 4 also shows NINo allocations for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania. The peak for NINo allocations for A2 citizens was the third quarter of 2008 (12,630) and the latest number for the last quarter of 2013 was 4,960. Interestingly NINo allocations for A2 workers tend to peak during the summer months and decrease afterwards, suggesting seasonal working patterns for A2 citizens.

Figure 4

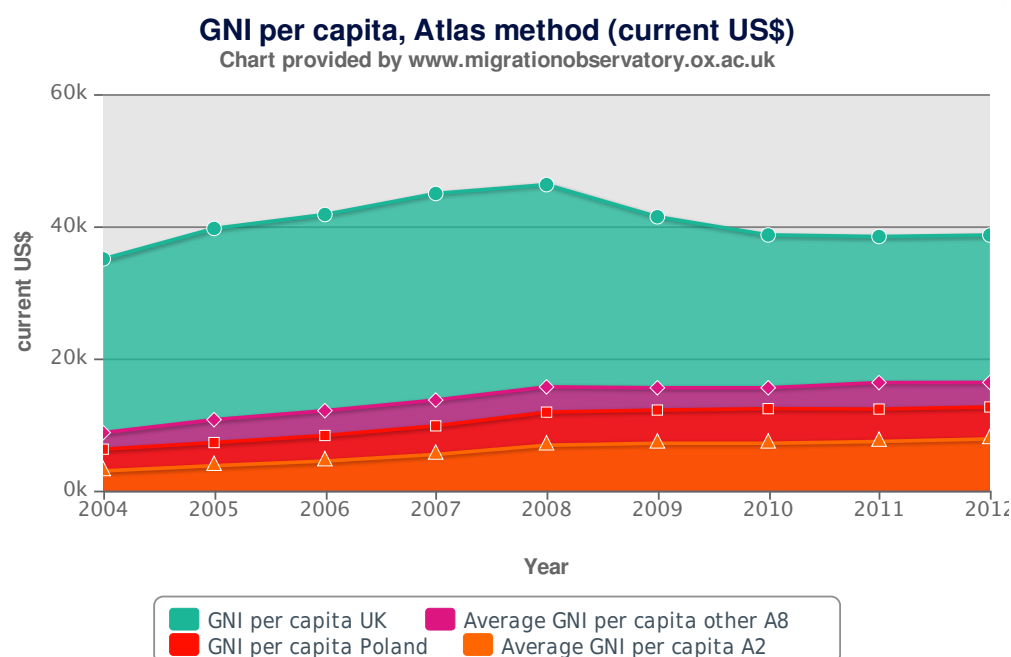


Source : Department of Work and Pensions

The income gap between the A8 countries and the UK suggests that an incentive for migration still exists

Figure 5 reports the average annual gross national income (GNI) per capita of the A8 countries (excluding Poland), the average annual GNI per capita of the A2 countries, the annual GNI per capita of Poland, and the annual GNI per capita of the UK. Even seven years after the accession there remains a significant gap in per capita income; especially for Poland, the demographic giant among the A8 countries. This sustained income differential between the UK and the A8 countries suggests that there still exists an incentive for migration from the A8 to the UK. Likewise, there is a substantial gap in per capita income between the A2 countries and the UK, which should encourage further migration in the future.

Figure 5



Source : World Bank, Open Data Catalog

Evidence gaps and limitations

The ONS's LTIM estimates rely heavily on the IPS, an imperfect data source – it is a sample survey, is voluntary and relies on people outlining their intentions (see the Data Sources and Limitations section of the Migration Observatory website for further discussion of the limitations of this data source). Likewise, the LFS is a voluntary sample surveys and while it provides data on A8 and other migrants in the UK, certain groups are excluded, such as those who do not live in a “household” – which would include students living in dormitories, or people living in hostels or bed and breakfast accommodation. NINo allocations do not indicate when a worker leaves the country and are, therefore, just a rough measure of inflows and not of the stock of migrants. The effectiveness of NINo allocations for measuring inflows is also limited because not all migrants request a number (Sumption and Somerville 2010).

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Further Readings

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Related Material

- Migration Observatory briefing – Long-Term International Migration Flows to and from the UK www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/long-term-international-migration-flows-and-uk

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The Migration Observatory

Based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford, the Migration Observatory provides independent, authoritative, evidence-based analysis of data on migration and migrants in the UK, to inform media, public and policy debates, and to generate high quality research on international migration and public policy issues. The Observatory's analysis involves experts from a wide range of disciplines and departments at the University of Oxford.



COMPAS

The Migration Observatory is based at the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. The mission of COMPAS is to conduct high quality research in order to develop theory and knowledge, inform policy-making and public debate, and engage users of research within the field of migration.

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About the author

Dr Carlos Vargas-Silva
Senior Researcher, COMPAS
carlos.vargas-silva@compas.ox.ac.uk

Press contact

Rob McNeil
Head of Media and Communications
robert.mcneil@compas.ox.ac.uk
+ 44 (0)1865 274568
+ 44 (0)7500 970081

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